

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of the claims replaces all previous listings of the claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A sample holder system for an automated sample analyzer, comprising:

a first well strip comprising a plurality of wells, a first end, a second end, and side walls, a first end engagement piece, and a second end engagement piece wherein said first and second engagement pieces are disposed on the same side wall of the first well strip;
and

at least a second well strip comprising a plurality of wells, a first end, a second end, and a first second engagement piece identical to the second engagement piece of the first well strip, and a second end; and wherein,

~~an interlocking device comprising a~~ the first engagement piece disposed on said first well strip and ~~a~~ the second engagement piece disposed on the second well strip ~~wherein said first and second engagement pieces cooperate connect together~~ to reversibly attach said first well strip ~~with~~ to said second well strip to form a sample holder system.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first well strip and said second well strip are ~~substantially the same~~ identical.

4. (Currently Amended) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first engagement piece of said first well strip is positioned substantially adjacent the first end of the first well strip, ~~and~~ the second engagement piece of said first well strip is positioned substantially adjacent the second end of said ~~second~~ first well strip, and said second engagement piece of said second well strip is positioned substantially adjacent the first end of said second well strip.

5. (Currently Amended) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first engagement piece and said second engagement piece of said first well strip ~~is~~ are

positioned on a first side wall of said first well strip and said second engagement piece of said second well strip is positioned on a second side wall of said second well strip.

6. (Currently Amended) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first engagement piece of said first well strip and said second engagement piece[[s]] of said second well strip are reversibly interlockable by horizontally sliding said first well strip relative to said second well strip.

7. (Currently Amended) The sample holder system of claim 1 further comprising:
~~a second engagement piece positioned at the second end of the first well strip; and~~
a first engagement piece of said second well strip identical to the first engagement piece of the first well strip positioned at the second end of the second well strip on a same side wall as the second engagement piece of the second well strip.

8. (Previously Presented) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first engagement piece comprises a flange and said second engagement piece comprises a slot and a slit.

9. (Previously Presented) The sample holder system of claim 1 wherein said first engagement piece is positioned at the first end of the first well strip and comprises a flange, and said second engagement piece is positioned at said second end of said second well strip and comprises a slot and a slit.

10. (Currently Amended) The sample holder system of claim 7 wherein said second engagement piece of the second well strip positioned at the second end of said first well strip comprises a slot and said first engagement piece of the second well strip positioned at said second end of said second well strip comprises a flange.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently Amended) An interlockable well strip, comprising:

a first wall;

a second wall;

a plurality of wells;

a first engagement piece on said first wall capable of interlocking a well strip; and

a second~~first~~ engagement piece on said second wall capable of interlocking a well strip, wherein

~~said first engagement piece on the first wall is configured to interlock with a complementary identical to the second first engagement piece on the second wall of another well strip, and said second engagement piece of said well strip is configured to interlock with a complementary first engagement piece of another well strip.~~

13. (Currently Amended) The well strip of claim 12 wherein said first engagement piece on the first wall is substantially positioned near a first end of said well strip and said ~~second~~ first engagement piece on the second wall is substantially positioned near a second end of said well strip.

14. (Currently Amended) The well strip of claim 12 wherein said first engagement piece on the first wall is positioned on a first side wall of said well strip and said ~~second~~ first engagement piece on the second wall is positioned on a second side wall of said well strip.

15. (Currently Amended) The well strip of claim 12 wherein said first engagement piece on the first wall comprises a flange and the first engagement piece on the second side wall comprises a flange~~and said second engagement piece comprises a slot and a slit.~~

16. (Currently Amended) The well strip of claim 13 further comprising a second engagement piece on a first wall at said first end and a ~~first~~ second engagement piece on a second wall at said second end.

17. (Withdrawn) A method for increasing the load capacity of an automated sample analyzer, comprising the step of:

interlocking at least a first well strip and a second well strip together to form a sample holder system, said first and second well strips comprising a plurality of sample wells.

18. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17 further comprising:

loading a plurality of said sample holder systems onto said automated sample analyzer;

detaching a first well strip from said sample holder system by disengaging said first well strip from a second well strip;

moving said first well strip; and,

analyzing said samples in said plurality of wells in said first well strip.

19. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17 wherein interlocking a plurality of well strips to form a sample holder system comprises slidably moving said first well strip horizontally relative to second well strip to engage said first and second well strips.

20. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17 further comprising introducing a sample into said sample wells wherein said sample comprises a body fluid.

21. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 20 wherein said body fluid comprises blood.

22. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 20 wherein said body fluid comprises urine.

23. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 20 wherein said body fluid comprises serum.

24. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18 wherein said sample analysis comprises analyzing said sample for a coagulation disorder.

25. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18 wherein said sample analysis comprises analyzing said sample for electrolyte concentration.

26. (Withdrawn) The method of clam 18 wherein said sample analysis comprises analyzing said sample to determine the presence or concentration of a drug.

27. (Currently Amended) A sample holder system comprising:

a first well strip comprising a plurality of wells, a first and second side wall, and a first and second end; and,

at least a second well strip comprising a plurality of wells, a first and second side wall, and a first and a second end;

each of said first well strip and said at least a second well strip further comprising a

a first flange on said first end of said first side wall and a first flange on said second end of said second side wall, wherein said first flange on said first end of said first side wall is identical to said first flange on said second end of said second side wall; and

a first slot on said second end of said first side wall, and a first slot on, ~~a slot on~~ said first end of said second side wall, ~~and a flange on said second end of said second side wall,~~ wherein said first slot on said second end of said first side wall is identical to said first slot on said first end of said second side wall; and wherein said first slot and said first flange of said at least a second side wall of said first well strip interlocks with said first flange and said first slot of said first side wall of said second well strip to form a sample holder system.